

Henderson High—25 years in the community

WL 30/5/78

Henderson High School is heading for its 25th birthday and plans to celebrate it in fine style.

In 1952, 8.8 hectares of swampy wasteland in Valley Rd, Henderson, were partially transformed into the first of many new schools for West Auckland.

As the distinctive long low profile of the Henderson High School plan took shape, local people realised that at last their semi-rural township had a social and cultural focus.

Since its official opening in 1953 the school, under the direction of its two principals Mr A. D. Woolcott and Mr G. B. Allen, has passed through many changes, but its community orientation is still strong.

Today there are few weekends when some part of the grounds is not being used by local clubs, and the hall is booked months in advance.

On Queen's Birthday weekend about 500 former pupils, staff and associates will meet at a series of events arranged by the Henderson High School Association.

Its president, Miss Mary Harrison, is delighted with the response from people all over the country.

She forecasts an interesting and enjoyable weekend to suit most tastes.

On Friday a chicken and champagne evening will provide a venue for the swapping of memories, to be reinforced by tours of the school on Saturday.

A brief official opening of the jubilee on Saturday morning will follow the opening of the school's new gymnasium.

by Mr Rodger Barton, who initiated the school's husbandry course in 1957.

The 2.4 hectare wasteland behind the school was for a time a commando course for army cadets and is now close-clipped playing fields.

Mr Bartons' hothouse has been transformed into

An interestingly high number of former pupils married "within the school" and now have children attending.

This "family" relationship is seen in past pupils who return as teachers or as Board of Governors' members.

Despite many changes in staffing over the years, a nucleus of "greybeards" remains.

Only three are 1953 originals — Mr Peter Allen (principal) Mrs Margaret Oatridge (senior mistress who joined the staff as Miss Hawkes) and Mr Fred Newton (caretaker).

On many counts, Henderson High School can look back on 25 years with pride.

The foundation principal, Mr Doug Woolcott, selected the motto "A Mind Aware of What is Right" and went on to fashion his school with that ideal in mind.

He saw the policy of the school as being to develop the health, skill and character of its pupils.

This challenge was taken up by his successor Mr Peter Allen.

In implementing this policy, the school has gone beyond the "ordinary" bounds of schooling and today offers a multitude of courses and electives at all levels.

Outdoor education, related arts, drama, photography, auto-engineering and metal craft are all taught, along with the traditional commercial and technical subjects.

Young people suffering various disabilities are welcomed to the work experience unit and

The official opening of the new Henderson High School gymnasium will coincide with the school's 25th jubilee celebrations.

The regional superintendent of education, Mr D.H. Thurston, will open the building on Saturday, at 1.30pm in a ceremony at the school's assembly hall.

The opening includes a tour of the gymnasium followed by afternoon tea for the Board of Governors and guests.

Saturday night's jubilee ball will be followed by a sports meeting on Sunday at which past pupils will match their weight and skill against the school teams.

The older former students will be surprised at the physical changes in the school that have taken place.

An aerial photograph from 1953 shows only five of the present 10 groups of classrooms, no assembly hall or gymnasium and no swimming pool or library.

From this rather stark beginning the school has blossomed, largely due to the trees and shrubs planted

an automobile workshop for the first auto-engineering course in a New Zealand school.

There are changes in the pupils too, with fewer of the farm-raised youngsters of the 1950s.

There are now about 1200 students compared with 150 in 1953.

Girls no longer wear panama hats with white gloves, and boys' caps were relinquished in 1961.

There are few "six-footers" showing hairy legs beneath grey shorts.

Instead the seniors dress in mufti of their own choice.



The original Henderson High School staff — 1953 — back from left, Mrs J. Curry, Mr D.B. Stevenson, Mr C.B. Noall, Mr G.B. Allen, Miss M. Lawrence; front from left, Mr A.J. Simpson, Miss J.P. Linton, Mr A.D.W. Woolcott, Mr e.w. tetley, Miss M.J. Hawkes.

Mr Allen, the present headmaster, and Miss Hawkes, now Mrs Oatridge, are still at the school.

Western Leader

Henderson - Schools - Henderson High

30 May 1978